include setting up of a special fund out of collections by way of additional duty of excise of Re. 1 per kg on tea for the development, modernisation and rehabilitation of tea plantation sector, implementation of—(i) an IT based Information Dissemination Plan for the tea industry including conversion of manual auctions into electronic auctions so as to improve the efficiency of the tea purchase systems, (ii) Special Tea Term Loan (STTL) which envisages restructuring/rephasing of outstanding term/working capital loans in the tea sector with working capital upto Rs. 2 lakhs at a rate not exceeding 9% to small growers, (iii) Price Subsidy Scheme for small tea growers for a period of four months from February to May 2004, (iv) a price sharing formula between small tea growers and manufacturers of made tea w.e.f. 1.4.2004 etc.

Strategy at WTO

613. SHRI S.M. LALJAN BASHA: Will the Minister of COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have held discussions recently with the stake holders and others to present its negotiating strategy at WTO;

(b) if so, whether Government will call more frequent meetings with the stake holders to apprise them of the development at WTO;

(c) how Government propose to strengthen the negotiating team at WTO to represent the farmers' interests; and

(d) the details of the strategy arrived at in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (SHRI E.V.K.S. ELANGOVAN): (a) to (d) Consultations on various areas under discussion and negotiation in the World Trade Organisation (WTO) are held from time to time by Government with-stakeholders, including farmers' associations, industry associations and representatives and other non-governmental bodies, concerned Ministries/ Departments and State/Union Territory Governments. To provide guidance to the Government, issue-specific studies have also been assigned to research bodies and Expert Groups, consisting of eminent persons, researchers and other stakeholders in various areas, have been constituted which meet from time to time depending on the exigencies of the

negotiations. Capital-based officials from the Department of Commerce and from other concerned administrative Ministries/Departments, including those related to agriculture, are deputed to participate in the negotiations as necessary, apart from representation from the Permanent Mission of India to the WTO at Geneva. The negotiators work within the parameters and negotiating strategy determined by Cabinet Committee on WTO Matters.

Pesticide content in tea

614. SHRI S.M. LALJAN BASHA: Will the Minister of COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the Tea Board has received proposals from the European Union to furnish details of the requisite level of pesticides in Indian tea;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) whether the Tea Board has sent any reply in the matter;

(d) if so, the details thereof; and

(e) whether it is also a fact that Indian tea has to raise its overall standards to cater to the European Market?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (SHRI E.V.K.S. ELANGOVAN): (a) and (b) Tea Board has not received any formal proposal in this regard. However, at a joint meeting held on 13th June 2003 at Brussels between the members of an Indian tea delegation and the representatives of European Commission, issues relating to maximum residue limits were discussed. During this meeting, the European Commission stated that it would be open to receiving data and dossiers in a structured format from third countries on an on-going basis.

(c) and (d) Tea Board has submitted detailed data on pesticide residue for six chemical compounds to the European Commission on 22.9.2003 and has proposed for harmonization of maximum residue limits based on field experiments carried out by the Indian Tea Research Institutes.

(e) Since maximum residue limits in European Union are stringent, the export of Indian tea needs to be done after proper evaluation of residue levels and the residue contents in tea are tested to conform to those